IS THIS INFORMATIONAL LEARNED HELPLESSNESS & COGNITIVE WARFARE?

Use this checklist to assess whether Informational Learned Helplessness may be operating in a situation, a community, or against an individual.

SECTION A — Personal Epistemic State

☐ Do you frequently feel that "no one can really know what's true" about important public issues?

☐ Have you reduced your consumption of news not from disinterest but from a feeling of overwhelm or futility?

☐ Do you feel your civic actions (voting, contacting representatives, public participation) produce no real outcomes?

☐ Do you accept negative political or social outcomes before they occur, without attempting to influence them?

☐ When you encounter conflicting information, do you typically disengage rather than investigate?

☐ Do you increasingly default to what people you trust say rather than independently verifying claims?

☐ Has your baseline tolerance for political/social ambiguity decreased — does uncertainty feel intolerable?

☐ Have you noticed a pattern of outrage (emotional engagement) without any corresponding behavioral response?

SECTION B — Information Environment Anomalies

☐ Are multiple, equally authoritative-seeming sources making irreconcilable claims about the same specific event?

☐ Has a major narrative appeared and spread very rapidly without clear organic origin?

☐ Are new social media accounts appearing in burst patterns that amplify the same narratives?

☐ Is a specific narrative advancing foreign-favorable conclusions appearing simultaneously across unrelated platforms/channels?

☐ Have deepfake or synthetic media content appeared in the context of a high-stakes political or military event?

☐ Is information appearing that is specifically designed to create the impression that "everyone is lying"?

☐ Does information timing seem suspiciously synchronized with real-world kinetic or political events?

SECTION C — Community/Institutional Effects

☐ Is your community experiencing a sharp increase in political polarization around a specific topic faster than real events warrant?

☐ Has trust in multiple unrelated institutions declined simultaneously and suddenly?

☐ Are community members increasingly refusing to discuss factual questions, treating them as purely partisan?

☐ Is there measurable decision latency — institutions or communities taking longer to act because "we can't agree on what's happening"?

☐ Are community members describing a sense that "nothing matters" or "there's nothing we can do"?

SCORING:

- **0–3 checks:** Low risk; standard information hygiene practices recommended
- **4–8 checks:** Moderate concern; apply pre-bunking awareness and epistemic security practices
- **9–14 checks:** High concern; active ILH indicators present; community-level response and anchoring recommended
- **15+ checks:** Active CW/ILH operation indicators; institutional escalation and documented reporting recommended

Your Score: _____